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ABSTRACT

The mutual accountability model is a vehicle for equitable evaluation, with staff and instructional improvement as the goal. The model's basic assumption is that responsibility for student achievement rests not solely on the teacher but is shared by the school principal, other school personnel, and parents. The model's plan is comprised of three major sections: program design, program description, and program evaluation. Program design involves a topical outline of course content for each subject in the school's instructional program. The program description adds: (1) objectives for each topic in the program design, stated in terms of student behavior; (2) process or procedures, which describe student and teacher activities which occur during instruction; and (3) resources or materials which are available to students and teachers for each objective. For each of these objectives, there is a corresponding, specified evaluation method. Basic to the model is a clearly stated agreement between teachers and the principal on teachers' duties, support expected from the principal and parents, and a mutual assessment, arrived at through periodic meetings, of the developmental needs and requirements of the teacher. Appendices describe the model and contain various corresponding materials. (JD)

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT: A MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL

THE NEW ALBANY PLAN

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A Working Paper

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT: A MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL
THE NEW ALBANY, MISSISSIPPI PLAN

In the field of education, effective personnel evaluation has proven to be a difficult task facing school boards and administrators. There is overwhelming agreement that evalution is necessary, yet there is strong resistance against evaluation programs, especially by teachers. Teachers have challenged evaluation programs in the courts and have had a high degree of success. This suggests many evaluation systems are faulty. The most popular system for teacher evaluation centers around the observation of the teacher in the classroom. Classroom observation usually finds an observer with a checklist or some other criteria that denotes what "good" teachers do. The criteria will include the following:

1. Content mastery
2. Human relations skills
3. Classroom management skills
4. Selection and use of materials
5. Motivation skills
6. Planning skills

Possession of the above skills is defended as desirable by educators. However, evaluation should be based on student production/achievement, according to the students' backgrounds and abilities, meeting school and school system goals, and personal growth. Evaluation should come over a period of time rather than what blend of certain skills a teacher is producing on a certain day, at a certain time. The observer usually defines the above skills and interprets whether the teacher has mastered them and

is using them in the correct proportion, at the time of the observation.

The checklist will not include the following:

1. Lack of student interest or motivation
2. High absenteeism on the part of students
3. Leaking roofs, high noise levels, hot or cold classrooms
4. Very few materials and supplies to select from
5. Inadequate or no staff development programs
6. Inadequate support services e.g., libraries, laboratories, guidance programs
7. Improper placement of students and teachers
8. Teacher survival skills
9. Etc., etc.

After the observation, the teacher and the observer may discuss the session, with strengths and weaknesses noted. A conference may occur immediately or after a few days. The teacher and the observer may be required to sign the form. Corrective measures, if needed, may then take many forms, such as expert assistance, college courses, clinics, etc. This is the most popular method of teacher evaluation and is most ineffective if used as the primary or only source to determine teacher competency. Can you imagine a superintendent being visited on one or two occasions by a school board member during a year, with these visits lasting approximately fifty minutes each? Can you further imagine the school board rehiring or firing the superintendent, based on these visits? Five or less classroom visits out of 175 - 180 school days and possibly 800 - 900 classes per year have determined the fate of many teachers. Is there any wonder why teachers resist evaluation programs? Principals are also opposed to existing

evaluation practices because they are forced to make monumental judgments with sparse, subjective evidence.

The model presented in this paper uses the classroom observation system as supporting evidence in an equitable program of staff deve opment. In order to coordinate a staff development and evaluation plan with Accountability In Instruction (AIM) for Mississippi, background information is presented.

Mississippi, the Magnolia state, is a lovely state in so many ways. We have glorious sunsets, beautiful gardens, magnificent beaches and waterways, recreation areas, historical sites, gorgeous antebellum homes, beautiful girls, three Miss Americas, metropolitan areas, and expanding industry. But all is not wonderful in Mississippi as you might expect in view of the facts that:

Mississippi has the lowest per capita income in the U. S.

One out of four individuals in Mississippi is on food stamps.

Federal transfer payments represent the major source of income for Mississippians.

Mississippi ranks 50th in annual teacher salary.

Mississippi has the lowest percent of high school graduates.

Mississippi ranks 49th highest in rate of illiteracy.

We have the highest dropout rate in the U. S.

However, Mississippi is on the verge of dramatic educational change. School districts and educators in Mississippi as they are in so many other states are beginning to sit up, take notice, and plan their own destinies. The mutual accountability model which will be discussed in this paper is the direct result of one North Mississippi school district's attempt to develop an equitable preliminary step to a comprehensive staff improvement

program.

In the 1980 state legislative session, it was mandated that by November 1, 1984, every school district in Mississippi would have an accountability plan. The Mississippi State Department of Education employed consultants to develop the format for the instructional management and accountability plan and in the ensuing years, educators throughout our State have been developing plans in their local school districts. The plan is comprised of three major sections: program design, program description, and program evaluation. The program design is simply a topical outline of course content for each subject in a school's instructional program. The program description adds three bits of information: (1) objectives for each topic in the program design stated in terms of student behavior, (2) process or procedures, which describe student and teacher activities which occur in the instruction, and (3) resources or materials which are available to students and teachers for each objective. Those three sub-parts complete the second major section. The final section of the accountability plan is probably the most crucial aspect. For each objective in section two, there is a corresponding, specified evaluation method. Schools have approached this in many ways, but most have opted to develop for each objective either sample test item(s), actual test item(s), or references to specific questions on standardized tests or to a set of items in district-developed test item banks.

As accountability plans in various school districts across the state are being finalized, teachers and administrators are viewing the plans with interest and skepticism. In most cases the accountability plans can potentially be used as one way to evaluate programs and teachers and can serve serve as a basis for planning staff development activities. Concern

has been expressed by many teachers that the accountability plans place an undue burden on teachers and make no allowances for such things as lack of student entry-level skills, lack of appropriate resources, lack of administrative and parental support, etc. Thus the mutual accountability model evolved. (See Appendix A.)

The model can be applied to all personnel i.e., principal, superintendent, librarian, etc. However, evaluation appears to focus on the teacher, rather than on other personnel in the system. Perhaps this is justified since in a school system teachers outnumber other certified personnel and are more directly involved in the instructional process.

It can safely be said that the primary purpose of evalution is improvement. That's a textbook statement, supported by the mass of literature. Many teachers think the primary purpose of evalution is dismissal. We do hear statements such as: "Why don't the schools get rid of incompetent teachers?" It is submitted that there may be incompetent persons in all schools and school systems. It is also submitted that no one stands alone. If one is a poor teacher, one or more poor colleagues are standing nearby. If one is unqualified to teach, then someone committed an unqualified act in the employment process. If one does not have knowledge of Bloom's taxonomy, or any other desired knowledge, then someone has failed to provide staff development or provide this information. Conversely, if one is a master teacher, one or more persons has provided assistance. Being good or bad requires help.

The Mutual Accountability Model has the teacher as the main character. Also having starring roles are the principal and the parent. The principal, and the parent and others must be held accountable, to some degree, for the

success or lack of success of the teacher. It is believed that when this is clearly understood, evaluation will become an improving process rather than a dismissing process.

The model begins with the teachers' knowledge of his/her duties. These duties are usually stated in a single job description. This model is suggesting two job descriptions for each teacher. We will call one the "general" description (see Appendix B) and the other the "variable" description (see Appendix C). The general job description is standard, requiring only minor adjustments annually, if at all. This description states qualifications for the position and general responsibilities required of all teachers. A sample format is as follows:

General

Duties and Responsibilities
Supervision Exercised
Supervision Received
Guidelines Used
Conditions of Work
Qualifications Received

The variable job description applies to the individual teacher and is applicable for a limited period of time e.g., the school year, a semester, or a grading period. The variable description is developed by the teacher in consultation with the principal and others. The teacher and the principal must approve the final document, which will include the following elements:

Expected mastery of instructional objectives
(taken from an approved systemwide Instructional Management plan)
Research assignments, independent study, field trips, etc.

Supplies, materials, equipment that are needed and to be supplied by the principal

Support that must be supplied by parents

A plan to involve parents

Staff development needed

Obviously, the variable plan cannot be developed overnight. Planning time is essential. A minimum of one week prior to the opening of school and two weeks after school has opened is suggested before a variable job description can be finalized. The teacher will spend the time before school starts analyzing student records, communicating with parents and school personnel. After school has begun, a period of time is needed to observe students before instructional expectations can materialize. It must be emphasized that flexibility is the key word in the variable job description, which is the major component in the evaluation process. It should also be noted that the principal should not blindly accept the teacher's proposed plan. He may question, offer suggestions and confer with supervisors and other personnel before agreement is reached that the plan is feasible. When the principal signs the document, he is indicating his accountability role in the success of the program. While a parent's signature is not required, the planned parental invovement program will be thoroughly documented as the school year progresses. Once the plan is in operation, a monthly checkup is suggested. (See Appendix D.) This may mean the teacher and principal will meet for five minutes, or a longer session may be required involving other personnel. The program may proceed as stated, or corrective measures can be taken. This stresses the flexibility of the model. A monthly instructional statement is being produced. This has long been

practiced in the business affairs of the school district where a monthly financial statement signifies the health of the school budget. This will guarantee the disclosure of problems at frequent intervals. Nothing should go unattended for a long period of time. At the end of the school year, the summary of the variable job description, the responsibilities of the fixed job description and other evaluative criteria will determine the progress of the instructional program and the competency of personnel.

It should be emphasized that evaluation at this stage is not focusing solely on the teacher. Information is available on all those responsible for the program. The basic assumption underlying the mutual accountability model is that when people share responsibility, they are more likely to perform. The model forces the principal to be actively involved in the instructional program. The implications are present for the involvement of the superintendent, board members, other school personnel and parents. The mutual accountability model is a vehicle for equitable evaluation, with staff and instructional improvement as the goal.

To take this theoretical model which has been explained and put it into practice might be assisted by detailing the methods found successful in the New Albany, Mississippi, school district. Preliminary questions to ask of administrators and teachers in an attempt to assess the prevailing conditions and attitudes to implementing the mutual accountability model include:

Do you see staff improvement as a high priority?

Are you satisfied with the current staff development practices in this school district?

Are you willing to devote time to implementing a change?

How are staff development activities planned?

Are they based on staff evaluation results?

Are you pleased with current staff evaluation practices?

What aspects of staff evaluation dissatisfy you?

Do you have job descriptions (general and variable) for each employee?

Are there student objectives clearly stated for all topics in all courses in the entire curriculum?

Do teachers know and agree to what is expected of them with respect to instruction, student achievement, parental involvement, community involvement, etc.? (general and variable job descriptions)

Are goals mutually developed and mutually analyzed annually, or more or less frequently?

Are you willing to accept responsibility (be accountable) for the instructional-learning process?

Do you want to work to adopt or adapt a model fo mutual accountability in this school district?

We began with a series of brainstorming and awareness sessions first with the superintendent and assistant superintendent. Once they were comfortable with the terminology and committed to a change, we continued similar sessions with principals and supervisors. Related literature and samples of many evaluation systems were made available for them to check out, read and discuss at the sessions. The administrators completed the job description questionnaires (see Appendix E) and brought these to the sessions to discuss and evaluate. They then decided to revise existing

administrative job descriptions (the general job descriptions) and are in the process of designing a format for detailing individual goals annually and delineating responsibilities for all concerned parties, such as school board, maintenance personnel, clerical staff, teachers, etc. (the variable job descriptions). They are also planning administrative staff development activities to enhance their abilities to set and achieve goals. It becomes quite evident that a statewide Management Institute must emphasize planning skills, time management, communication skills, etc., for effective leadership. Effective leadership, in turn, will provide the staff development needed for the educational quality our political leaders and citizens are demanding.

At the completion of the above activities, teachers will become involved in a fashion similar to the administrators. That is, some key leaders will be involved in brainstorming and awareness sessions. Position description forms will be completed by all teachers. Job descriptions (general) will be revised and detailed, and formats for variable job descriptions will be devised. Staff development activities will be planned based on targeted areas of need. Concerning timelines, be generous. Plan to spend six months or so on administrative job descriptions, six or more months on teacher job descriptions and at least a year to work out the kinks in the variable job descriptions. It is better to spend many sessions, many hours on each step of model development and have a workable, satisfying model than to institute a model that is neither accepted nor practical.

THE MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL IS A THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL MODEL WHICH MIGHT BE APPLIED IN A VARIETY OF EDUCATIONAL SITUATIONS AS A PRELIMINARY STEP TO PLANNING ANY COMPREHENSIVE, TARGETED STAFF DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

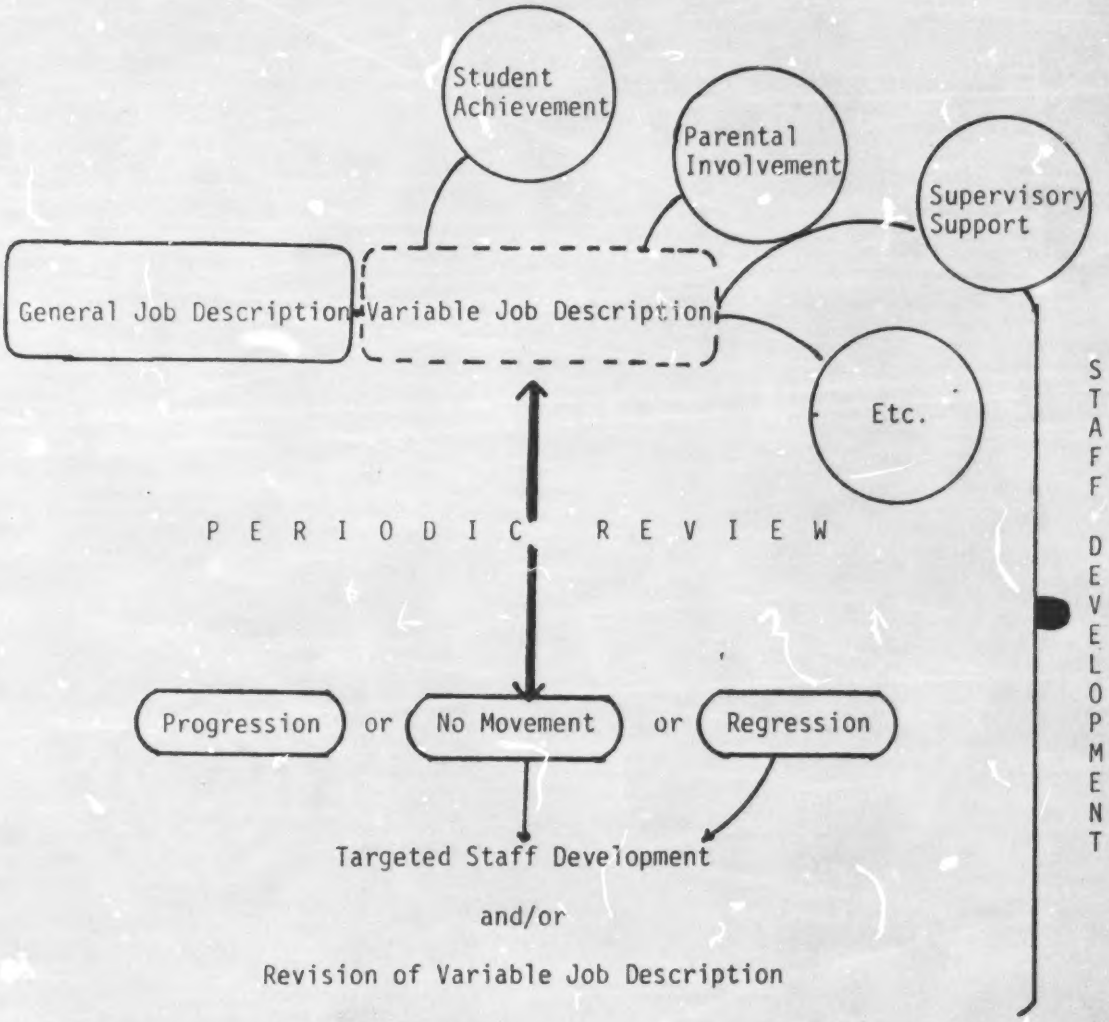
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The Mutual Accountability Model

Mutual Accountability Model

The general job description belongs to the systemwide collection of job descriptions and is understood by all personnel. The model begins with the Planning process, which results in the variable job description. The variable job description will necessitate a monthly review so no long periods of time will lapse before problems are noticed and corrective measures taken. The monthly reviews will indicate satisfaction, a need for staff development, parental/administrative support, or a change in the variable job description. The final or annual evaluation report will reflect the cooperative efforts of the teacher, principal, parent, and other supporting evidence. The assumption is made that when all parties know and accept their responsibilities, a determined effort will be made to secure a positive equitable evaluation, which will result in instructional improvement.



APPENDIX B

General Job Description

MISSISSIPPI CITY/COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

GENERAL JOB DESCRIPTION

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

GENERAL

The School Principal is responsible for administration, instructional leadership, and supervision of operation and management at the school building level. This job description, as supplemented by the appropriate job or position description, describes the work of the Principals of the schools of the division.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

(1) Organizes school program and plans for implementation of state and local curriculum guides; manages building instructional program; advises teachers on instructional methods, materials, and techniques; directs school staff development program for teachers.

(2) Contributes to division curriculum evaluations, revisions, and related projects; participates in division administrators' meetings; provides administrative support and coordination services to central office and other office activities; consults and coordinates with central office and other office personnel as needed; supervises student teacher training program at building level.

(3) Developes building rules, regulations, and procedures consistent with school division policies, rules, regulations, and procedures; interprets and enforces division and building rules, regulations, and procedures; prepares, distributes, and updates school handbook.

(4) Maintains efficient and effective work relations with and among staff members; holds periodic faculty and other staff meeting for the conduct of school business; disseminates needed information; encourages reciprocal communications within school; responds to staff requests, complaints, grievances, etc.; counsels staff members regarding work-related problems.

(5) Prepares and defends annual school budget proposal; manages budget allotments in accordance with building priorities; maintains proper account ledgers and other financial records.

(6) Interviews and recommends employment of school personnel; orients new employees to school; assigns and schedules building staff; recommends appointments to leadership responsibilities as appropriate; maintains necessary personnel records; provides for employment of substitute personnel.

(7) Leads and assists teachers in maintenance of proper pupil control; counsels individual students; confers with parents; administers discipline as appropriate; reports disciplinary action as required.

(8) Observes classroom teaching, administers division system for teacher evaluation; completes Report on Teaching for teachers severing employment; evaluates performance of other school-based personnel.

(9) Maintains open communications between school and parents, community groups and agencies, and other patrons; interprets school and its program to community; encourages parent and community involvement in school activities; coordinates and supervises after school use of building and facilities.

(10) Supervises maintenance of student enrollment and attendance records; assigns and schedules students; supervises and controls student records-keeping system; monitors reporting of student progress; coordinates and supervises pupil transportion.

(11) Oversees implementation of division health services program; provides administrative support for student health projects; participates in special education placement meetings.

(12) Supervises operation, utilization, and upkeep of buildings and grounds; prepares work requests; provides for purchases, receipt, distribution, storage, care, repair, and inventory of school building supplies, materials, and equipment; administers building OSHA and other safety and health programs.

(13) Oversees total operation and management of school cafeteria; prepares student and teacher lunch schedules; provides for supervision of students during lunch.

(14) Coordinates and supervises student co-curricular activities, approves and schedules educational field trips.

(15) Prepares miscellaneous requests, payrolls, memoranda, proposals, and correspondence, and various federal, state and local reports and surveys; maintains appropriate filing system.

(16) Other duties as assigned.

SUPERVISION EXERCISED

Supervises work of Teachers, School Nurse, Secretarial/Clerical Staff, Teacher Aides, Custodial Personnel; oversees supervision of Cafeteria Employees and School Bus Drivers.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED

Reports directly to Division Superintendent; works independently under general instructions, except where specific instructions are provided for the accomplishment of specific tasks.

GUIDELINES USED

Advice from central office and other office staffs, other building

administrators; consults Code of Mississippi Rules and Regulations of State Board of Education, Division Policies and Regulations Manual, state and regional accreditation manuals, state and local curriculum guides, division five year plan.

CONDITIONS OF WORK

Diverse responsibilities, frequent interruptions, deadlines.

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

Mississippi Professional Certificates bearing endorsement as Principal at the appropriate level.

Good character; ability to work effectively with students, parents, teachers, patrons, fellow administrators; good judgment; working knowledge of curriculum and instruction; initiative; financial planning and management skills; good health.

APPENDIX C

Variable Job Description

Variable Job Description

Period, beginning _____ through _____

Name _____ Position _____

School _____

Directions. Each person should list specific goals under each heading, if applicable to his/her position. Following the goal statements and under Resources, a list of supplies, equipment, instructional materials, travel, personnel assistance, staff development, etc., needed for goal achievement should be stated. The variable job description should be thoroughly reviewed and signed by the employee and his/her immediate superior. The employee is reminded that overall job performance also includes those broad duties, as stated in the general job description, on-the-job observation and other criteria deemed necessary for total evaluation.

I. INSTRUCTION

A. Goals

B. Resources

II. BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

A. Goals

B. Resources

III. PUBLIC RELATIONS

A. Goals

B. Resources

IV. EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

A. Goals

B. Resources

V. STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION

A. Goals

B. Resources

VI. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

A. Goals

B. Resources

VII. BUDGETS AND FINANCE

A. Goals

B. Resources

VIII. FORMS AND REQUIRED REPORTS

A. Goals

B. Resources

The aforementioned goals and needed resources for goal achievement have been reviewed and approved.

Employee _____

Title _____

Immediate Superior _____

Title _____

Date _____

APPENDIX D

Monthly Instructional Statement

Monthly Instructional Statement

Month _____

Name _____ Position _____

School _____

Directions. This report represents a monthly review of the variable job description. Any problems encountered and recommended solutions should be noted under the appropriate heading. Any changes in the variable job description should be recorded. No comments will indicate satisfactory progress is being made.

I. INSTRUCTION

II. BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

III. PUBLIC RELATIONS

IV. EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

V. STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION

VI. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

VII. BUDGETS AND FINANCE

VIII. FORMS AND REQUIRED REPORTS

Employee _____

Title _____

Immediate Superior _____

Title _____

Date _____

APPENDIX E

Job Description Questionnaire

Job Description Questionnaire

Name:

Home Address:

Home Phone:

Date:

School District:

School(s) Served:

Official Title:

Descriptive Title: _____

_____

_____

_____

Degree(s): _____

Certification(s): _____

Total years experience in school(s): _____

_____

List positions previously held in school(s): _____

_____

_____

_____

Total years experience in current position: _____

School year of first employment with this district: _____

Number of contract months: _____

A. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF DUTIES:

Please list your major and minor duties using only single words or short phrases (example: filing, report preparation, counseling, parent conferences). Estimate the percentage of time you devote to each duty.

MAJOR DUTIES: % OF TIME

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

MINOR DUTIES: % OF TIME

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

B. List any responsibilities required by your position that are conducted beyond the regular work day. (Examples: faculty meetings, ballgames, workshops, home visits, etc.)

C. SUPERVISION RECEIVED:

1. From whom do you receive work instructions? _____

2. Who is your immediate supervisor? _____

3. What type of reporting is required by your immediate supervisor to insure completion of your job duties and responsibilities?

D. SUPERVISION EXERCISED:

If you supervise other employees as part of your job, indicate their official job titles. If you supervise students, indicate the grades served and the number of students in each.

E. CONDITIONS OF WORK:

Please list positive and negative conditions which affect your work.

POSITIVE CONDITIONS	NEGATIVE CONDITIONS

COMMENTS:

The preceding job description questionnaire sufficiently and accurately describes the job of _____ (job title) held by _____.

Signature of person completing questionnaire _____

Date _____

Signature of immediate supervisor _____

Date _____